

DOWN
THE
BRIGHT
SEA

SAMUEL SCHIERLOH

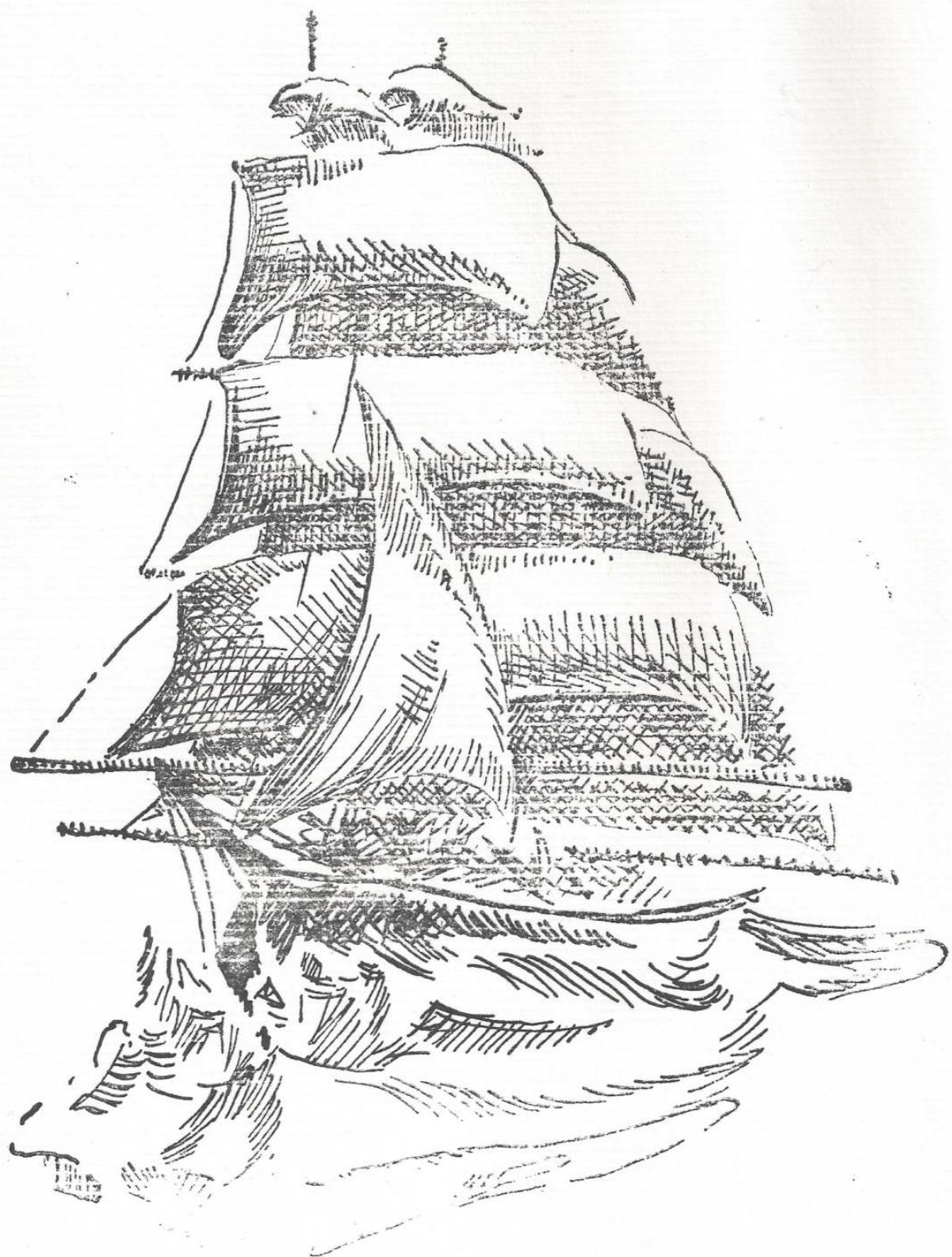
DOWN THE BRIGHT SEA SAMUEL SCHIERLOH

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BRIGHT SEA



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DOWN THE BRIGHT SEA — Schierloh



Christmas, 1964

Autographed for my
dear little namesake,
Sammy Schluter
Baker

Samuel Schirlo
Great-Grand Father -

DOWN THE BRIGHT SEA

DOWN
THE
BRIGHT SEA

SAMUEL SCHIERLOH

Author of GRAINS THAT THE HUSKERS LOST,
A Talaria publication.

Printed in the U.S.A.

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In-memoriam

To Clark B. Firestone, true poet, and never-failing friend, this book is dedicated

Frontispiece -- Jean Wiester

Several of the poems in this book have appeared in The Cincinnati Enquirer, The Cincinnati Times-Star, American Weave, Talaria, The New York Times, Ted Malone's "Between The Bookends", Ted Malone's "Adventures In Poetry", and School Bank News.

FORWARD

To those who would taste the freshness of living and the zest of life thru the medium of poetry, it is an unusual pleasure to commend my long-time friend, Sam Schierloh.

From the gleanings of his wealth acquired as a sailor in his youth, to the present as humanitarian (and great grandfather too), he imparts in "Down The Bright Sea", his second book of poems, the crisp, wholesome significance of the simple, but ever-fascinating experiences of "Mr. Everyman" in such charming and subtle manner, that we enjoy the overtones of beauty above the cacophony of hectic din and vitiating stresses of our era. The soul of nature obtrudes throughout this collection of verse, riding with the sweet serenity of a noiseless eventide.

Just one half-century ago, Sam "rounded the Horn" on a buoyant pilgrimage, to enjoy the seductive calm of the smooth Pacific. With the poet we taste the spume and spindrift; from the salt spray of the waves and the prodigal fruit of tropical isles, he has distilled the elixir of youthfulness for which, Ponce de Leon searched vainly five centuries before.

At present, with the inner power of knowing which the author has grasped, and for which most of us have only reached, he draws aside nature's broadstage curtain, to reveal in verse the pastel loveliness of the pasture at the dawn, the hoof-beats

of the wind stampeding over the moor, and the lover's kiss in the furtive moonlight!

“Down The Bright Sea” is refreshment most palatable to all who partake, because it is of the eternal values to be found even in the daily routine, which, in our haste to hurry, so many of us do not discern.

In offering this collection, Mr. Schierloh enriches our associations, and deepens our understanding of the perfect artist – the Creator of all that is.

July 7th, 1957

Cincinnati, Ohio

Robert W. Smith

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LEST THE ICONOCLAST

The mortal hand is weak;
I do not fear its thrust;
How shall it pierce the heart
Within this marble bust?

I am unending! Still ...
My eyes gaze through that door
For one who gathers up
The pieces from the floor.

RIVER'S BEND

From my tall hill the river's bend
Seems its beginning and its end;
I cannot see from where I stand
What waters gave it birth, what land;
Nor can I curve my line of sight
To follow it into the night ...

So all I know, the river's bend
Is its beginning and its end.

OAK

The oak tree then at last
When strikes the fateful hour,
Bows nobly as an oak –
And humbly as a flower.

LEST THE FROST COME

Say, last night I dreamed of England..
And, beyond a coppice wall,
Saw her covering her flowers
With her handmade English shawl.

REFLECTIONS

One thing about the pools
After the rain –
They give no comfort
Like a window pane –

But, though reflections hurt
After the rain,
'tis best to face the pools
Where dust had lain.

LOST MORNINGS

I thought this morning
I had never seen
So many robins
Hunting on the green,
Nor heard so many larks
Above the clover,
Exulting in the new dawn
Over and over;

But now I think
There surely must have been
A thousand thousand other mornings
When my ears heard nothing
And my eyes were blinded,
And I was ego-mad
And glory-minded.

SPARROW

I never hear a sparrow chirp
But that my heart grows lyrical;
Disdaining him, could I profess
To marvel at a miracle?

WINTER SNAP-SHOT

On winter nights the sycamore
Comes naked to the ghostly shore,
And, like the immortal “darling daughter”,
Merely gazes in the water.

BACK TO EDEN

I will go now
To the woodland and the lea,
Among the fields abloom;
And I will find there
The good land and the free,
And ample room.

Time enough then
For the spending of those hours
That dreams foretold;
And season enough
For the tending of those flowers
That in dreams I hold.

SANCTUARY

As if it knew my eyes were turned elsewhere,
The hoe had halted suddenly in air;
Lending a weed one moment's grace for growing,
And giving me one moment's rest from hoeing.

Now, on this winter day, the bare young birches,
White and upright like spires on country churches,
Reveal the sanctum where a cardinal's creed
Stayed the descending hoe to bless a weed.

TRIALOGUE

Future

“I am the beginning of a game of chess ...
A stroll down an unfamiliar street ...
I am old gods in new dress”.

Present

“I am the ultimate, dying ...
The sudden green of winter wheat ...
I am spring lambs, crying”.

Past

“I am dishes washed and put away ...
The silent wake of feet ...
I am the game you used to play”.

WINTER SONG

Do you remember sleigh-bells
Ringing down the street,
When winter nights were merry nights,
And lips were young and sweet?

Do you remember peering
Through a frosty pane,
When winter stars were wishing stars
Above a crystal lane?

Do you remember strolling
Slowly in the snow,
When winter nights were peaceful nights,
O, so long ago?

PRETENTIOUS LAWN

Only the clever hand of man
Designed and made you thus;
Fulfillment of a ten-year plan,
But object of much fuss.

I think, with your forbidding sign,
You hardly can compete
With this free wilderness of mine,
Grown for the heart, and feet.

THE SONNET

Mothered by virgin springs
The sonnet is a river
In a new-found land.
It makes its way twixt hill and hill;
It cleaves the mountains
To keep its destined path.
Ever expanding, never relaxing,
Nourishing always ... till,
Almost suddenly,
It pours its whole majestic self
Into a magic sea
Of infinite horizons.

OF GHOSTS

There is a skeleton for every ghost;
And when the ghosts are sleeping
We hear no rattle of the bones
Of skeletons creeping.

If we disturb a sleeping ghost
('tis said a tongue may cause it)
We hear immediately a stir
Within the closet.

WINTER GLOOM

Sleet will follow this rain
Like a chill follows
The heat in pain.

Yesterday I saw the sun
Make merry the swallows –
But their joy is done;
For today I see
No glistening feather
In sunlit tree –

Only the weather
That has linked together
These thoughts in me.

ABSENTEE

The humming-bird returns no more
To dip for honey
From the last
Weigela well.

LAST CICADA

She cries her final note,
And leaves the night to silence ...
I must surrender
To the silence
Of the winter.

NOTE TO CERTAIN FRIENDS

As the leaves fall
In the autumn haze
So from the tree of life
Descend our days.

Only the old can feel,
Only the old can know
The struggling on the stem,
The winds that blow.

Years have their recompense ...
Only the old recall
Ever-returning springs,
The wonder of it all.

RURAL PICTURE

The car, the rolling highway,
And the dawn;
A pasture like a forty-acre lawn;
In the misty light,
Where stars had played
At dominoes last night.

MUSINGS FROM THE SHORE

Only a johnboat creeping up stream
And a fisherman bent at his oars ...
This, at the dawn, or with night coming on,
Is Neanderthal man at his chores.

NEW MOON

Copper kettle simmering
Above the embers of the day;
The great blue-ceilinged room
Is a miracle of gold and grey.

A thousand candles flickering,
Timidly they come aflame
In the giant chandelier
When the kettle's but a name.

EVER THE DREAM

A man, a mule, and a plow,
At noon in the alder shade;
The man dreams, but the mule knows
Only half the furrows are made.

Night, and the man still dreams
Of corn standing ten feet tall;
But there's no today nor tomorrow
For the mule in his narrow stall.

AUTUMN THOUGHTS

October is here
And harvest is in,
With assurance of plenty
Heaped high in the bin;

The autumn of life
Now also appears,
And I wonder how full
Are the bins of my years.

TOMMY ATKINS . . . 1942

Rommel did not remember
And Hitler never guessed
That Tommy in the desert
Is Tommy at his best.

He stumbles in the jungle
Where snakes play hide and seek,
But Tommy in the open
Is Tommy at his peak.

He may fall unsuspecting
A prey where devils lurk
But let them show their faces
And Tommy goes to work.

So here's to Tommy Atkins –
With blisters on his feet
Who's turning on the Nazis
A bit of desert heat;

And here's to Tommy Atkins –
Forgiven Singapore –
He's burning up the desert
To even up the score.

YOU CAN'T ESCAPE HIM

In Zanzibar I met a man
Who told me how the war began;
We drank, we argued, drank some more –
I knew I'd met that man before.

Someday in some far Zanzibar,
Someday when I've forgot the war,
I'll learn who finished it, and then
I'll know I've met that man again.

AFTER UNCONDITIONAL
SURRENDER

When come the great tumultuous days
That gods return, and gods are dead,
When the triumphant music plays,
And feet are light, and feet are lead,
Let then no conqueror forget
How gods are slain and what the cost ...
Twelve hours hence that sun is set,
And lo, the worshiper is lost ...

With yesterday's forgotten years,
Are Coventry and Lidice;
And rivers of tomorrow's tears
Already have their natal day.

DEEP-SEA DIVER

Once upon a time
When seeking pirates' gold
I reveled deep in slime –
But that's a story told;

Now my feet of lead
Drag me to ocean floor,
To wade between the dead
A million souls or more.

SURVIVORS

What does the great whale think
In his ocean lane,
Seeing the ships that sink
To the dark domain?

These are his ancient foes
Pursuing one another –
Mounting the crest, he blows
To the moon, his brother.

SILVER BARQUE

The moon explores the islands of the sky.
She knows the channels of the various bays
And inlets;
The solitudes of dark low-hanging shores.
The singing night-wind fills her silver sails,
And out from a far lagoon she steals
To chart the archipelago;
Then, just before the dawn,
From the last blue bay emerging,
Down the bright sea she runs
To the homeward of horizon.

SAILOR'S LAMENT

The road from London to Dover
Runs wistfully down to the sea,
Where many a brave young rover
Once dreamed of the man he'd be.

The roads of the sea are lonely,
And the sea-wind sighs for a sail;
And the bosun-bird knows only
The desolate wave and the gale.

Born is a new-age demon
That encircles Earth in a day ...
Gone is the care free seaman,
And the call of the faraway.

EXILED IN MAGELLAN STRAITS

Remembering now those old ships
In that cold and dismal port,
Those black-hulled freighters, moored
By decree of a seaman's court ...
Whipped by monotonous waves,
The salt-caked barnacled hulls
Of ships that could never escape
The screams of the pitiless gulls ...

Not a soul on deck, not a soul below,
To hear the wail of the wind;
Only the ghost of the skipper
Who against the sea had sinned;
Who had failed the cry of distress
That came from a dark lee-shore –
“Ship aho.....y! Ship aho.....y!” The voice
Had cried
And then was heard no more.

I remember those old black ships,
I remember that eerie night
When the wherry and I were the only things
Alive in the phosphorous light,
When I thought I heard a call
As I headed back for the bouy,
A cry from a distant bridge
“Aho.....y there! Boat aho.....y!”

WE SAIL AT DAWN

All hands around the capstan
To tread the merry mill;
And we will slip our moorings
While the harbor yet is still.

We'll drink the mists of morning
As we head for open seas;
The sails can fill their bellies
When they breakfast on the breeze.

We'll rout the stormy petrel
From his sleep upon the wave;
We'll stir a Spanish galleon
In its forty-fathom grave.

We'll dip below horizons
Into magic seas of yore –
And find a port at evening
By a dream-enchanted shore.

OLD SEAFARING MEN

They were once a crew of ten
Young and able sailormen,
And they furrowed the fields of the sea.
They were seamen through and through,
Not a landsman in the crew
And they furrowed the fields of the sea.

They could lift their voices high,
Run the skys'ls to the sky,
When they chorused the songs of the sea.
Not a one of them could sing
Arias to please the king,
But they chorused the songs of the sea.

Now those days and nights are gone,
And they drowse there on the lawn
Of a home for old men of the sea;
And the only ships that pass
Are the shadows on the grass
By that home for old men of the sea.

BUCKO-MATE

He was a big two-fisted brute,
Feared and detested;
Long-armed, short-legged,
And barrel-chested.

He kept a belaying pin
In his hip-pocket,
But around his bull neck
Hung a silver locket.

So we bided the day,–
Consoled one another –
When he'd gather his gear
And go home to mother.

MOON

The moon is a parasite,
But beloved of all
She never makes us scratch;
But sometimes we get the itch
When the little witch
Stands in naked garb
Outside the latch.

TRINITY

Down, down the dark lanes of the night
The soul guides, we must go;
Though we can see old Cerberus
Guarding the gates below.

We must outwit him, soul and I,
If we would gain admittance
And rescue Heart, the little fool,
That sold himself for pittance.

POETRY AND
A PEASANT

Pennies in my pockets,
Payments for my verse;
Pennies for my porridge –
I've a peasant's purse.

Should I pen a poem
Worthy of the name
I might spurn the porridge –
And starve on fame.

BLACKBERRY TIME

Quietly now, the berry-pickers,
Early from town,
Search for the hidden treasure
Where the vines bend down,
Dripping with garnet and sapphire,
Showered with jade ...
Where handfuls of amethyst
Pour in the shade.

MOMENT IN JANUARY

Stepping outside on a January day,
Hailed by a song-sparrow's roundelay,
Was this morning's antidote for sorrow ...

Strange, that wonder and joy should be
Held in the arms of a naked tree ...
I shall listen again tomorrow.

TONIC

Oh this small talk
Of gowns and slippers
And hose and zippers
Let's take a walk;

And let's be still
Just for an hour,
While the redbud shower
Pours on the hill.

THE PATH

Down birchen halls the luring path
Winds stealingly around
The trees, and in a sudden climb,
It leads where upland roots abound,
Where sundrops dance in pantomime.

It wanders aimlessly along, until
Its thirsty fringes sip
The cool sweet waters of a stream,
And drinking, leaves the shore to slip
Through shadows where the glow-worms dream.

It dares the slopes of thorn and thistle,
Explores the deep ravines;
Abruptly meets and old rail-fence;
And lackadaisically leans
Against it, wondering what lies hence.

AUTUMN TIPPLERS

Two yellow butterflies
On a spree together,
Under October skies
In the late warm weather.

These are the hours indeed
To wet one's whistle ...
Wine from the ironweed –
Scotch from the thistle.

PIRATES

The starlings have taken the winter tree,
On every arm they roost;
Like sailors manning the yards aloft
Before the sails are loosed.

They stay but a moment, and off they dive,
All in a sudden gale;
Leaving behind them a plundered ship
Without a sign of a sail.

MARCH

March is a sea-horse
Raring to go,
White tail and mane,
Groomed for a show.

March is a sea-horse,
Give him the reins;
Let him go galloping
Down the sea lanes.

March is a sea-horse ...
Soon he will rest,
Winded and weary
On the spring crest.

DISCOVERY

My books are children,
Good and bad;
In pretty print
And tatters clad.

Some are bright
As new minted pennies;
These have the favorite
Nooks and crannies.

To the less captivating
I give little space,
I keep them subdued
In a dusty place.

But, I must tell you,
One dreary night
I put the favorites
Out of my sight;

I took a stepchild
From its shelf,
Surprised the child
Amazed myself –

For oh what beauty
I detected
In an urchin
Resurrected.

ETERNAL VERITY

These aging ears are not what they once were;
The old familiar tumult now is still;
But I can hear the hoary cockle-burr
Grinding his spurs upon a windy hill.

MERCY UPON THEM

Hard is the street
Where aimless feet
Shuffle along;
Bleak are the skies
Where tired eyes
Stare without song.

FOOTFALLS IN THE SNOW

Footfalls in the snow,
Past my house they go;
Some are sprightly, light,
In the winter night;
And I hear gay laughter
In the distance, after
Music of young feet
Fades upon the street.

Footfalls in the snow –
Some are labored, slow;
Not a note of song
As these toil along;
But they bring the pounding
Of quick heartbeats, sounding
Through the night, long after
The last note of laughter.

MY FATHER

My father was a fisherman
And every time the weather
Seemed God's good gift to fishermen
We'd tramp upstream together.

My father loved the little streams
He never saw the ocean;
He used to say the little streams
Were ripples of emotion.

He'd sit for hours on the bank
And watch his floater bobbing;
His slightest stir upon the bank
Would set my young heart throbbing.

Now, I recall, he never cared
Too much when empty-handed,
But this I feel, he mainly cared
About the boy he landed.

AESOP NOTWITHSTANDING

The tortoise won the race,
For the hare was a rover,
Content with second place
And his belly full of clover.

The tortoise won the race,
But the trophy is rust;
For you can't keep face
With your belly in the dust.

TONIGHT

All day on the road
The sun was no respecter of persons;
Guards and prisoners alike
Wiped sweat from brows;
But tonight
Why does the moon
Lay those bars across my cot.

FEAR

I once met a man on a midnight road
Where the moon shone full in his eyes;
I spoke to him with a fear in my voice
A fear I could not disguise;
For his face was round and pale as the moon,
And he stared at the moonlit skies.

I spoke to him, but he answered not,
And his step made never a sound;
While my hastening feet on the pavement rang,
And I heard my heart-beats pound,
I ran and ran down that midnight road
As fast as the swiftest hound.

I ran till the road dropped into the dawn,
When I saw the smiling face
And the outstretched hand of my friend the sun,
And I knew I had won the race
From my other self down that midnight road,
The road that is called disgrace.

STAMPEDE

The winds, like wild horses,
Sprang up in stampede;
They raced down the highways
With tail-flying speed.

I heard their loud breathing,
I felt their fierce breath;
They ran as if fearful
Of onrushing death.

They plunged to the river
To reach the far shore ...
I watched their safe passage,
And saw them no more.

O tempora! O mores!

There is no quiet in the day;
The mind must follow the world's way.
Eye, ear, and tongue all have their part,
Leaving no moment for the heart.

How still the night is can be said
Only when what was sound is dead;
Then stillness sets up such a din
One cannot hear his soul within.

AFTERTHOUGHT

The night wind wails like a soul forlorn
That curses the day it was ever born;
I see that my windows are fastened tight,
For who would be host to lost souls tonight?
Tomorrow the wind through the pines will sing,
And I'll leap to my door with a welcoming;
Tomorrow? What if a dirge be sung in the pines
For the soul of one versed in the penning of lines?

ON THAT WINTER NIGHT

I marked Polaris on that winter night,
Certain the warmth of all the world had waned;
The moon behind me flashed her ghostly light
Now in, now out the clouds, like one unchained
To stalk me; stumbling on, I was restrained
From cursing her cold laughter as I fled,
Restrained by ice that froze my tongue, and stained
My lips with purple blood; now I am dead ...
She is a candle by my winter bed.

SHINING TASK

Black boys in emerald suite
Rhythmically swinging,
Cleaning and brushing boots,
Inwardly singing;

Doing what gentlemen ask
Is their plain duty ...
But from the shining task
Emerges sheer beauty.

STORM CLOUDS

Who has not seen the thunder-wolves
Come charging upon the rams,
Come ravishing the ewes,
And devouring the little lambs?

Who has not seen the herdsman's wrath
In the flash of the lightning's eye;
Who has not seen the wolves dispersed
In the glance of a clearing sky?

FROM A PORCH CHAIR

Now the hedge bloom is alive
With blue butterflies that thrive
On the sweets of summer.
Here and there in spiral dive,
Far from his secluded hive,
Spins the busy hummer.

Why should I this afternoon
Clip away such honeyed boon?
I'll forget the clippers!
Summer passes all too soon,
And this peaceful day in June
Calls for pipe and slippers.

NON-EUCLIDEAN

One never would guess in the leaf-green days
That a tree is a deep geometrical maze;
Now, in the winter, that old slippery-elm
Is a text in the wide mathematical realm.

Count the triangular forms, or, if you would spend
Merely the days till the bleak winter's end,
Count only the perfect ones, etched in bold sweep
On the page of the sky when the wind is asleep.

And there are the thousand frustrated obtuse
Little angles, poor playthings of weather's abuse;
And the rhomboids that swing willy-nilly about
Must have given old Euclid his hour of doubt.

The master has drawn, and the student has learned
That all is not just what he thought he discerned;
That grandeur and grace, and geometrical form
Are reduced to but relative terms in a storm.

PRAYER FOR EARTH

Hold firmly, God, this grain of sand,
This merest pebble in your hand
A pearl is in the making, God,
New-born within the nacre-pod.

Hold firmly, God, nor fling away
Impatiently this bit of clay;
Perfection and eternity
This very instant are to be.

CATERPILLAR

I watched a wooly-worm one day
Set out across a long highway;
What call, I wondered, had been heard
To stir that lowly thing, what word?

I watched it with abated breath
Escape the crushing wheels of death;
But neither halt nor hesitation
Had a part in that migration.

Then, one day in a nearby wood,
I found its goal, and understood ...
Deep in a dull cocoon I saw
The core of the eternal law.

HIS WAY

I thought – now God could end this thing,
This rule of might.
By dropping from his stellar plane
A meteorite ...
Just then, a cardinal, winging,
Flashed across the green,
Etching in crimson arc
A vision of a Hand
Unseen.

UNTIL ...

Black wet street
And silent rain;
Midnight wail
Of far-off train;
Little town
Is hushed in sleep,
Quiet, save
When drenched leaves weep ...

Weep they will
Till war-wise men
Go to bed
Like boys again.

DECISION

... and now I come to you
with that one word -
all tremulous, let it be,
or not be

heard ...

and with that word,
till now unspoken,
the heart and lips are one,
the silence
broken ...

LINKS TO AN OLD FAVORITE

Lady Bug, Lady Bug,
- So the song sings -
Your children are gone,
Impatient their wings.

Lady Bug, Lady Bug,
Fly on alone;
Take wings of the evening -
Your children are grown.

LATE TRYST

No moon tonight ...
The black roofs of the town
Upward to heaven frown
For want of light.

A park tree sighs,
The twilight tales are told;
The bench is bitter cold –
A starling cries.

A ghost is near –
It murmurs through the trees
The age-old agonies,
Darkness and fear.

A lovers' tryst –
Darkness and fear dispelled
When someone's closely held
And kissed ... and kissed ...

THE KISS

Pity the primitive savage
That never knew such wild delight
As the high anticipation
Of a kiss, come night.

What diviner plan than this –
That woman should desire
And man may beg
A kiss.

SMUG HILL

Down in the distant valley I can see
The giant ogre, industry;
Breathing smog,
Belching smog ...
Crocodile in steaming bog ...

Yet, on my unpolluted hill I sense
The measure of such impotence
As is of sand ...
Drifting sand ...
In forgotten land.

SPRING BEYOND THE DREAM

I shall detect the first full notes of spring
Not in the symphony of melting snow
And crackling ice, nor in the winds that blow
The March crescendo; wild geese on the wing
Shall not bestir me from my wintering.
The lilac starring in an April show,
The purple violet, these I must forego;
And every song that April drawings bring;

But I shall cast my winter cloak aside
When warring nations fling their sword and gun,
Their lie, their hate, into the soundless sea;
Then ! then will spring be homing on the tide
Toward every harbor, and the winter done ...
The world at peace is spring enough for me.

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Typography and format:
Will Tullos

New Athenaeum Press,
Lake Como, Florida.
1957

About the Author

Samuel L. Schierloh was the Poet-Postmaster and Artist of Mount Washington, Ohio. He was born in 1889 in Reading, Ohio. He served with the United States Navy from 1906 to 1910, sailing aboard the USS Tennessee as a signalman. He then embarked on a brief career as a tailor. He entered the Postal Service in 1928 and retired in 1951. At the time of his retirement he had been superintendant of the Mt. Washington Post Office for about seven years.

Bowler, golfer, and painter, his favorite avocation was the composition of poems. He was co-founder of the Anderson Hills Poetry Club and member of the Greater Cincinnati Writers club for 38 years.

He published two books of poems, "Grains That the Huskers Lost" and "Down the Bright Sea."

In addition, he was author of an historical series for the Mt. Washington Press, and for a few years, poetry editor for the Press.

He served as secretary of the Mt. Washington Merchants Bowling League for about 20 years.

Mr. Schierloh was president of the Writers League for several terms, and past vice president of the Ohio Poetry Day Association. He was a member of the Mt. Washington Methodist Church.

He and his wife, Mrs. Sarah Leona Noon Schierloh, were married for 57 years. Samuel Schierloh passed away In October, 1968.



Samuel Schierloh (lower right) aboard the USS Tennessee, ca. 1908

Retyped:
Samuel Schlueter

Great Grandson
Folsom, California
2014

DOWN THE BRIGHT SEA SAMUEL SCHIERLOH

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